5: Simons K-5 (ca. 1882) 1885
SC13 Goajiro SC13

133 on a clear day can be seen from any point in it. On the west side a small hill attached spoils its beauty, seen from seawards, otherwise it is perfectly symmetrical in form. The Indians call it Jopita. It lies [103] in the Cocina district, and is the most dangerous portion of the Goajira. To visit it, I had to persuade Martin, one of the great chiefs, to ac- [115] company me with his three sons, uncles, nephews, &c. We started at daybreak, rode all day, and arrived *in time to see the sunset* from the [123] top. We only saw three Indians the whole day, yet Martin assured me that all our movements were watched, and pointed out to me two probable places where an ambuscade would be planned for our return. We returned by a different road, getting back at 4 A.M. tired, hungry, and thirsty. I found the height to be 1200 feet above sea-level, or 900 feet above the plain. The rock is composed chiefly of trachyte with large crystals of felspar, similar to those of the Drachenfels on the Rhine. As also belonging to this group may be considered the two isolated hills rising in front of Cardon de los Remedios and Carrisal, close to the north spur of the Cojoro range, called Jallare. They are both insignificant and do not exceed 400 feet in height. The Cerros de Carpintero, a small group of hills behind the Cabo de la Vela, are of more importance, they are about 700 feet above sea-level. From Cabo de la Vela to Puerto Estrella, between the hills and the sea, are innumerable cliffs and banks rising to 200 feet, usually with very abrupt edges, and covered with rolled stones.

Rivers properly speaking there are none in the Goajira. The country is cut up in all directions by shallow, dry, sandy beds of water-courses, that during the rainy season carry off the water as fast as it falls. Not even the Macuira Hills are able to send a flowing stream to the sea during the summer, which here lasts at least eight months. It [552] will have been remarked that the Indians have no collective name for their mountains, each little projecting point rejoicing in its own name. With their rivers it is still worse, for not only every water-hole adds a new title to a river—and these are innumerable, the custom being to dig for water in the sand of the watercourses, and as these wells dry up others are dug farther up stream—but every path that crosses the watercourse has its name. Even any prominent rock or large tree is enough to add to the interminable list of river nomenclature. On the plains below the Teta the drainage is effected by numerous small streams winding about in a most bewildering manner, and although perfectly dry, they usually have pools of muddy water at the bends. As the plain is little above sea-level, the water has cut deep zigzag channels, very different from the shallow sandy beds of the hills. The water remaining dammed up, instead of gravitating to the sea, causes the great fertility of the plains.

342 The principal source of water for the Indians are wells. These are of two kinds; first, the most common, by digging, usually in the dry

7:Bolinder T-5 (1920, 1955) 1957
SC13 Goajiro SC13

CHAPTER 4

Towards a Mirage

Our donkey caravan tripped along between the sand dunes at a gentle trot. The sun poured what the Indians call its molten gold over us in fierce waves. The donkeys were slow, but our riding-mules were fresh and even tried a trick or two, throwing our photographer, who was no expert, into a cactus bush. That was a pity, for the spikes were as long as knitting needles and unpleasantly hard and sharp. The Indians laughed heartlessly. It was perhaps the only amusing thing that happened to them on the whole trip.

We had no idea what our men were called. As I have already mentioned, the Indians' first names are secret. They always say: 'I have no name' or 'Call me what you like'. Your name is part of your personality. You cannot surrender it to strangers. If you know another's name, you can acquire a certain hold over him, just as you can harm him, if you had some of his hairs or nail-clippings with which to work magic. The family name, that of the clan, is naturally public. White people usually give Spanish names to the Indians with whom they have to deal, and there are plenty of Juans and Josés in the peninsula now. Usually, however, you give a nickname to the Indians you have temporarily in your service, just as they give their employers nicknames. We discovered that they had christened our photographer 'The Red One'. He was not red-headed at all, but very fair, and because of that, his face was always highly coloured in the heat. I could not get out of them what they called my wife and me. I suppose they thought that we would be offended or regard it as insubordination. They had been

7:Bolinder T-5 (1920, 1955) 1957
SC13 Goajiro SC13

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Left: *I help an old man, who had never seen matches, to light his cigar*

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Chinca, a girl of simple family, (on the left) and a well-born maiden expensively perfumed in a white tunic

[516]

Indian camp and a mestizo

[Facing p. 49]

7:Bolinder T-5 (1920, 1955) 1957
SC13 Goajiro SC13

CHAPTER 6

Indiscreet Investigation

123 THAT heading really describes our activities during the next few weeks, while we travelled round among the Indians of Macuira, visiting them in their ranchos and questioning them about all sorts of things. The Indians were not at all self-conscious and gladly and frankly told us all [6.48] we wished to know. They had not been bullied by white people, as so many other Indians have, and we took care not to make fun of their customs. Because of that, they had no inhibitions. The monks assured us that on the whole we should be able to make the acquaintance of the Indians in more peaceful conditions in the Macuira Hills than elsewhere in the peninsula. They had put it about that we belonged to quite a different clan from the Creoles, which our appearance seemed to confirm, and they thought that it would never occur to the Indians to avenge themselves on us, if one of them had been insulted by a white person somewhere else. Of course, we ought to be careful, they added, and promised to give us a reliable servant. The snug little whitewashed hut in which we lived was to be at our disposal as long as we remained in Macuira. From it we could go off for trips of a few days, as it suited us, and so get to know the whole area.

115 We got our servant, an unusually nice Guajiro called Francisco who had often travelled with Father Crispin. Francisco was peace-loving, but not at all afraid of his fellow Indians. That was a great advantage. In dealing with primitive peoples you must always keep calm, especially when they appear aggressive.

7:B61inder T-5 (1920, 1955) 1957
SC13 Goajiro SC13

115 685 And her eyes shone at the recollection of the now forbidden pleasures of her girlhood.

When I went on trips in the surrounding country I 124 usually had Francisco with me and often my wife. Anita had then to be ready to feed us when we came home, whether it were the same day, or the next, or three days later. In such things Indian women have patience. They know how to wait, and they are never surprised.

We began our exploration of the brown hills and green 124 valleys of Maculra with a long trip on foot. Laboriously 556 we waded through the fine sand. This is almost firm when it is damp, but it was then the dry season and the sand was loose. We were going to visit relatives of Francisco, simple people, but not actually poor. To us who had already had a certain amount to do with Indians, it was a surprise to find ourselves dealing in such categories as 'rich', 'poor', 'well-to-do', etc., just as though we were concerned with white people. Among all other Indians the difference in economic status between individuals had been relatively insignificant, as, presumably, it had been among the Guajiro before they took to herding cattle.

133 The Indians we were to visit lived in a beautiful place, just on the fringe of a watered valley between purple brown heights, with the peak of Ituhor dominating the landscape. The valley was like a green Bengal fire against its parched 342 background. There were two huts, built of cactus wood and with roofs of the same material. They were saddle-backed and linked by a wall, which acted as a shield against the wind, that there always blows in the same direction. In front of this wall, that is between the two houses, were the [417] fires. Round about were shelves covered with grass and erected on four poles. The Creoles call these *trojas*. You can sit under them and be out of the sun, and cooking utensils and stores can be kept on them out of reach of animals. [352] Here and there were hammocks stretched between poles stuck in the ground, and there were other poles used in the all but daily butchering of a goat or sheep. Round these there were dark patches on the ground.

123 352 Having Francisco with us we were naturally well re-

7:Bolinder T-5 (1920, 1955) 1957
SC13 Guajiro SC13

123 352 534

celved. They brought out stools carved with animals' heads and tails for us to sit on, and then four young men hastened to entertain us with music. I had happened to ask about musical instruments and it appeared that we had come to a musical family. They all played the flute, which there was usually small, of reed or wood, and ornamented with carved figures. There was also a larger flute which had a mouthpiece and reed, like a child's trumpet, and a calabash at the other end. This instrument buzzed and droned like a bumble-bee. It was extraordinary. It did not seem a South American instrument at all. In fact, it was quite simply an offshoot of the eastern snake-charmer's flute, which I had seen in Morocco. How had it got to America? Perhaps through the Moors. The early Spanish discoverers had Moorish slaves and servants with them, and, as we shall see, this flute was not the only indication of Moorish influence.

[171]

Guajira is often called the Arabia of South America, because it too is an arid peninsula with a population largely consisting of nomad herdsmen. In the distance a Guajiro caravan looks thoroughly eastern, and who knows from whom the Guajiros' forefathers acquired their knowledge of how to ride and to rear cattle?

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Not wishing to spoil the concert, I said nothing of all this. I myself am quite unmusical, but my wife gave the performers full marks. The pieces had names that suited the setting: 'The Little Goat seeks its Mother', 'The Horses are driven Home', 'By the rippling Water'. The four also sang. To European ears their singing was considerably less attractive than the music, but the words were often poetical and lovely. 'The little goat laments and says: the water that I drink is salt and salt are the plants I have to eat. And just as it begins to drizzle, the little goat's salt tears fall along with the other drops upon the salt ground.' In that perhaps was a little too much salt, but it was typically Guajiran. Even a goat can get too much of what others seek so avidly elsewhere.

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They showed us other musical instruments: a drum that was played for dancing and a whistle made of calabash, intended for signalling. One of the four also produced a

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7:Bolinder T-5 (1920, 1955) 1957
SC13 Goajiro SC13

musical bow. It was quite small. He held one end between his lips and struck the strings with a stick. If the reed-flute was introduced by the Moors in those early days, the musical bow must have come with negro slaves. Stringed instruments were not known in South America before the arrival of the white man. The Indians knew nothing of all that, but neither of these two originally foreign instruments were used in their rites, which supports the conclusion that they were introduced late.

The concert was interrupted by the women announcing that a meal awaited us. This began with the oily, somewhat nauseous berries which the Creoles call olives. We did not like their taste and never did more than just sample them. We had also heard that they might be injurious. The main dish—one could almost say, naturally—consisted of boiled dried goat's meat, the standard fare in the peninsula, and we were given water that also tasted of goat—we preferred not to know why.

In Guajira it is possible to dry meat in the sun without salting it, providing you cut it in strips and remove all bone. In moister parts of the Caribbean countries meat has to be properly salted before it can be preserved by drying, but in the dry air of Guajira that can be dispensed with. Salt, too, is a thing of which they have more than enough.

Having four young men present, I thought I would arrange a competition for marksmanship with bow and arrow and with a sling. The prizes were an empty biscuit tin, a handkerchief and a needle. These were all desirable things and the contestants did their best. The fourth received a Swedish ten öre piece as consolation prize.

I took the opportunity to take a closer look at their weapons. The bows were powerful and had round sections; the arrows had iron heads shaped like a lancet. An old man said that in the old days the heads used to be made of bamboo. Some of the arrows, those intended for smaller birds, had blunt points made of wood or wax. The quarry was meant to be stunned by the force of the impact. They showed us arrows equipped with cross-pieces to prevent them becoming lost when used in the scrub. The cross-

7:Bolinder T-5 (1920, 1955) 1957
SC13 Goajiro SC13

I have had to anticipate to tell how the secret of the arrows' effect was discovered. Let me now go back to where we were sitting on our stools talking with the Indians. It was late in the day and Francisco suggested that we should stay the night and go on at daybreak to another place where lived some prosperous Indians who had many materials and earthenware vessels. They had hammocks that we could borrow. It was a good suggestion and our hosts were more than agreeable. They wanted to vacate one of their huts, but we preferred to sleep in one of their open sheds. It was cool and, being tired, we fell asleep while the Indians were still sitting round the fire.

We were awakened by plaintive singing. It was still night. The Guajiro are excessively early risers. In the tropics you become accustomed to getting up at daybreak, but there on the peninsula everybody woke at three o'clock, when there were still a couple of hours of darkness left. Three o'clock was even a suitable visiting-hour. They liked to take advantage of the coolest part of the day, which was from three to six in the morning. The singing came from the big hut beside us. It was followed by a spoken rigmarole. The whole was as dreary as a funeral mass, and the voice was an old woman's. I discovered that it was a sort of pagan morning prayer for the children, used all over Guajira, in which an old woman recalled the memory of departed relations. If any of these had been killed and left unavenged, she would not neglect to remind the children of the fact and point out the guilty person. It ended with yet another wailing song.

What the old woman told them about their ancestors and injuries received was impressed upon the children's minds by hearing it repeated every morning in this way. Thus is a blood feud perpetuated from generation to generation.

We made ourselves porridge and took our departure as day was breaking. Then we tramped on through the sand to the next rancheria. There only the women were at home, but as it is the women who make the things we wished to see, that suited us quite well. The huts were larger than

7:Bolinder T-5 (1920, 1955) 1957
SC13 Goajiro SC13

CHAPTER 8

Innocence and the Fertility Dance

MAUANA invited us to visit him again, and we were glad to do so. We liked him and his oasis. Also he taught us a lot, for he was knowledgeable and intelligent, a proper chief who was not called *cacique* just out of politeness, as is the case with many rich mestizos near the border.

The Indians expect a great deal of their chief. He has to be an adroit negotiator, able to uphold the clan's rights and support its members. In war he is the leader who must be in the van and never yield. He must be ever hospitable, a good speaker and in every way a worthy representative. Mauana seemed to be such a chief.

Our only means of repaying his hospitality was to give a great porridge feast—we had a lot of oatmeal with us. The Indians loved our porridge, perhaps because it was reminiscent of their own maize gruel, which we ourselves far preferred. This feast took place on Mauana's next visit to Nazaret, and after it he was eager for us to pay him another visit, promising to show us dancing.

On our arrival we were introduced to the 'princess', his unmarried daughter. Mauana wanted us to photograph her. She was not pretty, but typically Indian in appearance. She had to put on all her finery and her paint, and her mule was saddled and decked out as for a ceremonial occasion. She had gold and coral at her neck, ankles and wrists, and large spiral patterns painted on her cheeks. Her mule had three tails: its own and two artificial ones, such being the fashion then. The girl was no film star: she was as stiff as a ram-rod and not to be thawed. Luckily, her skin looked light on the photograph, as every Guajiro girl desires it to be. Mauana

7:Bolinder T-5 (1920, 1955) 1957
SC13 Goajiro SC13

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Indians with a stolen goat near the Cusina Hills

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The white man's dangerous magic: the film-camera

Below: *Indian camp with cactus fence*

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[facing p. 144]

7:Bolinder T-5 (1920, 1955) 1957
SC13 Goajiro SC13

known of his clan. The road across the hills was bad, and at times we had to dismount and walk. Now and again we met Indians; the well-to-do leading their riding-mules, the poor followed by half-naked women carrying loads. The men carried lots of arrows. The road was reputed unsafe. The leader of each such company received a little tobacco. We heard that they were all coming from the funeral, which evidently was one of importance and would last quite a while yet. Our companion, the rich Indian, said that he expected to reach the house of mourning in six days. He thought that we ought to go there too, but the place lay a good distance off our route and we had had our fill of Indian feasts for the time being.

Francisco had travelled with Father Crispin and knew the district. He advised us to halt for the night early in an Indian rancho ringed with a stout cactus palisade, where friendly people lived. We could have gone farther, and the Indians with us who were going to the funeral carried on, but then, according to Francisco, they would not have been welcome at the rancho. We never learned the ins and outs of the Indians' friendships and enmities.

At the rancho we bartered a piece of raw sugar against a sheep. Both our pack and riding animals were already tired. They had had far too little fodder and the water was salt. The Indians were up before cock-crow, as always, and we let them get the mules ready. If we could just get to Castilletes, they should have fodder and decent water: we needed provisions ourselves. But what about the sheep, asks the attentive reader. That went the same evening we bought it, our hosts partaking of it as heartily as our own people. It went, offal, guts and all. When nothing but the bones were left, these were split and the marrow sucked out. Then the women gathered up the remains for broth. That sheep cost the equivalent of fourpence-halfpenny. Our means were limited, but at such prices we could at least afford to feed our men. The difficulty was in getting hold of things to eat. The Indians know how to tighten their belts and are prepared to starve for a while, if need be, but they must have a blow-out now and again.

7:Bolinder T-5 (1920, 1955) 1957
SC13 Goajiro SC13

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Pile-dwellings with a kitchen garden

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Indians wait patiently while the leader of the expedition sleeps in his hammock

Below: *Flock being driven over the steppe*

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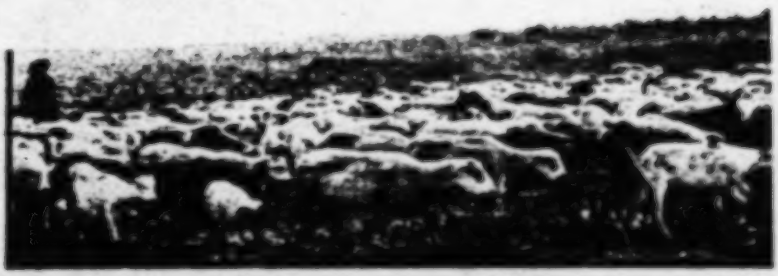

[facing p. 176]

/540 cont./

614 The continued influencing through a series of generations,
614 even though nevertheless brief, by Spanish culture and the
177 spirit of modern times has finally also altered the primitive
178 judgment and feeling of these Indians and has strengthened in
them the pride to assert themselves now as "enlightened."
It therefore need not be surprising that today they laugh in
the face of a foreign visitor when the latter poses his questions
as though he himself regarded a blood descent of the clan
members from their totem animal as established and factual.
● [123] The above-mentioned Cacique Briscol (15) even whispered

15. This pure-blooded, intelligent, and experienced Indian refers several times to the clans of his Guajiro people in his well-written story.

disrespectfully in my ear: "You must not suppose that we
think of an animal when we present the totem as our ancestor.
Every ancestor was as human as we are; only at the very be-
ginning was he just like the totem that each clan has had
since then. Our forefathers respected their totem animal more
than we do today; they neither persecuted it nor ate its flesh.
Now the habits of our ancestors are disappearing among us,
one after another. There are now only sixteen independent
614 'castas'; their number was formerly double that." V. Gutiérrez
773 herself agreed with Briscol's interpretation when she presented
114 the introductory words to another myth, "The Distribution
/541/ of the Clan Districts" (p. 170): Mareiwa "then told
the birds they were Indians" /translated from the Spanish/.
Such words make it clear: the myth knows no distinction be-
tween totem animal and Indian in their mode of being and
acting! Therefore one does not get anywhere in the analysis
of myths with a knife-sharp dialectic lacking any imagination.
614 Thus, I may indeed, along with the reporters from former
times up to our day, regard the social division of the Guajiro
people as properly totemistic in style. Two years ago (1959),